

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER  
LISTED

JUL 03 2008

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Lee, H. D., Company Complex

Other name/site number 169-4900-0250

2. Location

Street & number 248 N. Santa Fe ☐ not for publication

City or town Salina ☐ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Saline Code 169 Zip code 67401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination  
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patricia Bolman DSHPO

5/16/08

Signature of certifying official/Title  
Kansas State Historical Society

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional  
Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National  
Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register

☐ removed from the National  
Register

☐ other, (explain:)

Lee, H. D., Company Complex  
Name of Property

Saline County, Kansas  
County and State

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2		total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter Categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION: manufacturing  
facility

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION: industrial storage

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: processing

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: CONCRETE/BRICK  
Walls: BRICK

Roof: ASPHALT

Other:

**Narrative Description**  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Lee, H. D., Company Complex  
Name of Property

Saline County, Kansas  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☒ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

INDUSTRY

### Period of Significance

1904-1950

### Significant Dates

1904; 1927

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Lee, Henry Daniel

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

unknown

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

Lee, H. D., Company Complex  
Name of Property

Saline County, Kansas  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .92 acres (40,000 square feet)

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	4	6	2	0	7	5	1	4	3	0	0	2	8	3
Zone	Easting				Northing										
2	1	4	6	2	0	8	3	4	4	3	0	0	2	8	4
Zone	Easting				Northing										

3	1	4	6	2	0	8	3	5	4	3	0	0	2	1	3
Zone	Easting				Northing										
4	1	4	6	2	0	7	5	2	4	3	0	0	1	7	8
Zone	Easting				Northing										

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Christy Davis  
Organization Davis Preservation Date 8/22/2007  
Street & number 909 1/2 Kansas Ave, Suite 7 Telephone 785-234-5053  
City or town Topeka State KS Zip code 66612

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

Name Lee Development, LLC, c/o David Bieberly, Bieberly Architects  
Street & number PO Box 1731 Telephone 785-823-9221  
City or town Salina State Kansas Zip code 67401

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas

**Narrative Description**

**Setting**

The HD Lee Company is located at 244-258 North Santa Fe Avenue on the north end of downtown Salina, Kansas (pop. 45,679), the principal trade center for north central Kansas. The complex, which lies one block west of the McPherson Branch of the Union Pacific Railroad, occupies the site of the company's first building, constructed in 1889 and destroyed by fire in 1903. In the late nineteenth century, the original building was surrounded by a mix of commercial, residential and industrial buildings. There were single-family dwellings to the north, south and east. To the west were a series of one and two-story commercial buildings that created the northern reaches of downtown. Businesses on the west side of the street included the Elmo Hotel, a bakery, a meat market, a grocery. The Novelty Carriage Works was located directly across Santa Fe Avenue. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the block became increasingly industrialized. By 1905, the complex shared the block with a foundry/machine shop and a bottling works. By 1931, the setting was principally industrial. No dwellings remained on either side of Santa Fe. There was a plethora of auto garages and other auto-related structures, including auto sales shops, machine shops, vulcanizing, and body shops. The setting took its current form during the 1920s.

**Exterior**

Overall

The existing HD Lee Complex includes three principal connected masses – a long narrow five-story mass that abuts East Elm Street on the north, an equally sized long narrow mass that lies 40' south of the first mass, and a five-story mass on the south end of the parcel. The area between the two narrow masses, historically a dock, was filled in with an industrial freezer in the recent past. The second and third masses are tied together with an entrance/stair tower. The northernmost mass, constructed 1904, originally housed the HD Lee Mercantile Company. The center mass, also constructed 1904, originally housed the HD Lee Hardware Company. The third mass, built 1927, housed a hardware warehouse.

The two 1904 masses are brick masonry and timber-frame construction with brick exteriors and simple corbelled brick cornices. The masses feature original double-hung double and triple windows on their west elevations and 2/2 arch-topped windows on their north, south and east elevations. The south elevation of the Mercantile Company and north elevation of the Hardware Company opened to a shared drive/dock. Both masses have storefront windows on the main floors of their west elevations. The hardware warehouse mass is reinforced concrete construction with brick facing. The masses are visually tied by a continuous corbelled parapet.

Front (West) Elevations

The front elevation of the Lee Complex faces west toward Santa Fe Avenue. The front elevation of the Mercantile Company (1904) is divided into three bays, which are delineated by brick pilasters spanned by window openings each with triple 1/1 double-hung wood windows. The main entrance is centered on the façade and flanked by storefront windows that have been partially filled in with brick. The exterior material on the first story of the mass is limestone. The front elevation of the Hardware Company

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 **HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas**

(1904) is also divided into three equally sized bays with double windows between brick piers. Historic photographs indicate that each of these window openings historically housed two 1/1 double-hung windows. In recent years, the historic windows have been replaced with single-pane glass separated with a vertical mullion. Like the first-floor openings on the Mercantile Company mass, the openings on the first floor of the Lee Hardware Company mass are filled in, in this case with a combination of structural glass block and brick.

The front elevation of the hardware warehouse (1927) is divided into six bays. The entrance is centered on the first three bays, which are delineated by a stepped parapet. The entrance has double doors with a multi-pane transom. It is flanked on each side with two windows. On each story, the three first bays have a wide multi-pane window above the entrance flanked on each side by two square windows. On the south end of the west elevation of the hardware warehouse, there are four bays that have wide multi-pane windows on each story of each bay. Like those on the other two masses, the first-floor window openings have been enclosed. The first floor exterior features a combination of concrete and brick.

### Side (North) Elevation – Elm Street

The north elevation of the Mercantile Company mass, which fronts Elm Street, is divided into ten bays. The first, second, third, fifth and seventh bays have two narrow 2/2 windows on the second through fourth floors, with the exception of the top floor of the first bay, which has three windows. The fourth, sixth, eighth, ninth and tenth bays have one narrow 2/2 window on the second through fourth floors. Although the first through ninth bays are nearly equal in size, the tenth bay, nearest the front elevation, is narrow. On the first floor, there are twelve 2/2 windows and four overhead doors.

### Rear (East) Elevation – Fifth Street

The east elevation of the hardware warehouse is divided into four bays. On the first floor, each bay has a three-part multi-pane industrial steel window. The second through fourth floors have slimmer multi-pane steel windows. The east elevation of the Hardware Company is divided into three bays with a 2/2 narrow arch-topped window on each floor of each bay. The rear elevation of the Mercantile Company also has a 2/2 narrow arch-topped window on each floor of each bay, with the exception of the fourth floor of the third bay, which has no window opening.

### Loading Docks

The south elevation of the Mercantile Company and north elevation of the Hardware Company historically faced a loading dock. In the recent past, this loading dock was filled in, in part with a one-story refrigerated storage facility. This non-historic feature will be removed as part of the proposed rehabilitation project. The windows that face the loading dock area are 2/2 steel sash with hoppers. There are two fire escapes on the dock side of each mass. The two masses are linked with an industrial bridge.

## **Interior**

### Overall

The interior of all three masses retain their historic industrial character and open floorplans. The historic structural systems, timber-frame on the two 1904 masses and reinforced concrete on the 1927 addition, are visible. The timber-frame masses have wood floors and ceilings. The reinforced concrete mass has concrete

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas

Section number 7 Page 3

floors, ceilings, and piers, in addition to brick infill curtain walls. Throughout, there are few architectural details.

## First Floor

The west fourth of the Mercantile Company is divided into office space, which is accessed via an entry vestibule on the center of the mass's west elevation. Original features include a historic brick fireplace, tin ceilings, a vault with cast-iron vault door and surround, wainscoting, wood trim, and plaster walls. Non-historic materials, including wood paneling and suspended acoustical tile ceilings, obscure some original materials. The area that occupies the east three fourths of the mass has an open floor plan. There is an enclosed stair tower east of the vault, which is on the east end of the office space. There is an elevator shaft centered on each of the north and south walls. There is another enclosed stair tower in the rear quarter of the mass. East of the elevator tower on the south wall is a double door that provides access to the enclosed dock area.

On the south end of the dock area, there is a double door that provides access to the first floor of the Hardware Company, which, like the Mercantile Company, has an open floor plan. The Hardware Company is divided into two nearly equally sized spaces, which served two original uses - wholesale hardware on the west end and heavy hardware on the east end. Each of these spaces has an elevator shaft centered on its south wall. Each of these spaces also has a narrow open wood stair in the center of the spaces. There are two enclosed spaces on the west end.

A stair/entrance tower on the west end and two openings on the south wall of the Hardware Company provide access to the hardware warehouse. Like the other two masses, this mass also has an open floor plan. There is an office on the southeast corner, a stair tower on the northeast corner, and two restrooms north of the office on the southeast corner. Finishes in these enclosed spaces include wood wainscoting, wood doors, and metal restroom partitions.

## Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Floors

The second through fifth floors of the three masses are identical in floor plan to the first floor, with the following exceptions. There is no vault or enclosed office space on the west end of the Mercantile Company. There are no enclosed spaces on the west end of the Hardware Company mass. In addition, there are no enclosed spaces in the hardware warehouse mass.

## **Summary**

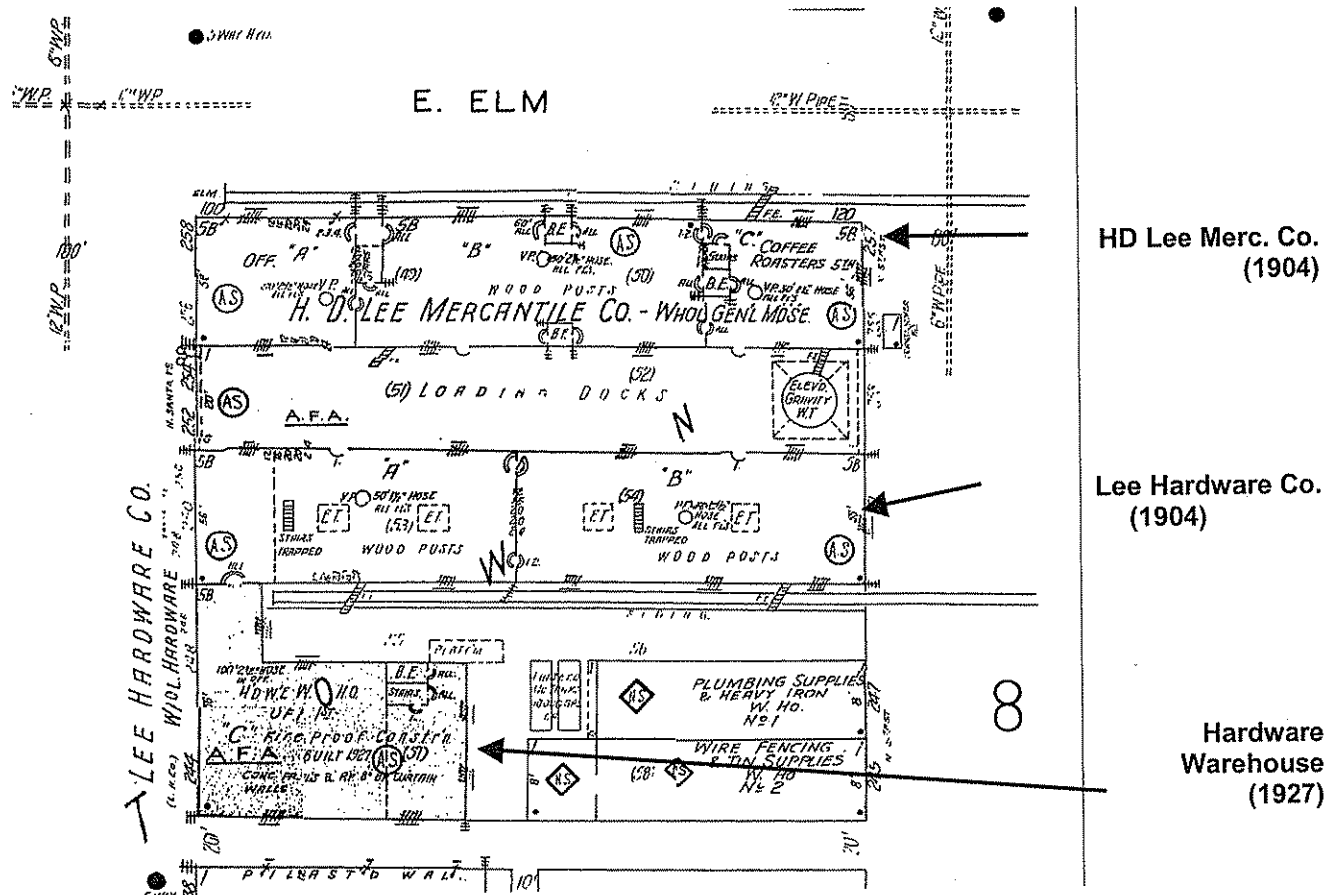
The HD Lee Complex retains a high degree of integrity from its original construction and use as an industrial facility.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas



Annotated 1947 Sanborn Map.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas

## Statement of Significance

### Introduction

The HD Lee Company is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for national significance under Criterion A for historical significance in the areas of Commerce and Industry and under Criterion B for its association with Henry Daniel Lee, the founder of HD Lee Mercantile Company and HD Lee Hardware Company. The HD Lee Company became one of the world's largest clothing manufacturing companies and is best-known today as the manufacturer of Lee Jeans. This industrial complex retains a high degree of architectural integrity from its period of significance, which spans from the construction of the two main connected masses after a devastating fire destroyed the original building in 1903 to 1950 when the Lee Company sold its grocery interests and transferred its headquarters to Kansas City.

### The Birth of Big Business and the Evolution of American Retail

Industrialists like Henry David Lee came to define American capitalism in the late nineteenth century. In the years following the Civil War, railroads, the nation's first big businesses, created a vast transportation network that would broaden markets for a broad assortment of manufactured goods. Before the establishment of railroad networks, Americans subsisted on goods they or their neighbors produced. Mass distribution of products only became possible with the development of the railroads, which along with a coinciding development of large cities, provided for the first time concentrated markets for mass-produced goods.<sup>1</sup>

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the means by which goods were bought and sold evolved rapidly. Before the Civil War, the nation's commercial districts were filled with cottage shops where the persons who made the products - glassware, tin, tailor-made clothes, agricultural implements, etc. - sold their wares. Because manpower was high and volume was low, cottage-produced goods were expensive. Advances in mass-production and transportation networks eased the production and distribution of cheap products. By the 1880s, when HD Lee founded his wholesale grocery business in Salina, the railroad allowed for the shipment of goods from manufacturers and producers to wholesalers, which distributed the products to local grocery stores and a growing number of department stores, a new breed of localized retailers who offered a broad array of mass-produced goods.

In the waning years of the nineteenth century, a second breed of industrial-age retailers appeared. The mail-order house, epitomized by Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Wards, eliminated the middleman, the retailer, and brought mass-produced goods directly to the doorsteps of consumers. By the early twentieth century, local department stores were being supplanted by a third breed of retailers, chain department stores like JC Penney and Kress, which opened stores in every major U. S. city. Mass retailers like mail-order catalogs and chain stores provided a new market for manufacturers. Lee capitalized on the nation's new retail structure when he began manufacturing his own clothing in 1911. The new retail environment allowed Lee and other manufacturers to negotiate distribution to a few key retailers, rather than to the thousands of small retailers. Soon Lee Jeans were being sold at chain stores, and beginning to build its reputation as a trusted national brand.

<sup>1</sup> The population of New York, the nation's largest city, expanded from 33,131 in 1790 to nearly 1 million in 1890.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6 **HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas**

## Henry Daniel Lee, Captain of Industry

HD Lee's biography reads like a Horatio Alger novel. The abundant of accounts of his early life are inconsistent and, like many tales of the lives of nineteenth-century industrialists, may have been embellished to accentuate a "rags to riches" theme. Lee was born into a large family in Randolph, Vermont on December 8, 1857.<sup>2</sup> Some accounts say he was one of 9 children, others say 12.<sup>3</sup> When Lee's father, a Canadian or Irish immigrant tailor, died in the early 1860s, his mother Margaret Cunningham, a native of Scotland, was left to raise the children on her own.<sup>4</sup> According to some sources, Lee was "farmed out" to neighbors until he was 11, when he left for Tunbridge, Vermont with \$1.50 in his pocket.<sup>5</sup> In Tunbridge, Lee enrolled in school where, according to some accounts, he lived in the attic. After completing four years of studies, the school offered him a teaching job.<sup>6</sup> Lee, who later said manufacturing success was his boyhood ambition, turned it down to seek his fortune in the West.

At the age of 15, Lee took a job as a night hotel clerk in Galion, Ohio.<sup>7</sup> To augment his income, he also shined shoes. After a few years, Lee managed to save \$2000, which he used to leverage a \$3000 loan from banker CL Crim to invest in real estate. According to one source, Lee first entered the merchandise business in Galion, Ohio in 1871. By his late 20s, Lee's real estate and merchandise interests had earned a profit of \$20,000, which he used to leverage a \$50,000 loan from banker CL Crim. In 1875, Lee used the money to buy the Central Oil Company of Lima, Ohio.<sup>8</sup> Although Lee apparently sold 51 per cent of his interest in the oil company to Standard Oil in 1879, the 1880 census still lists his occupation as "oil merchant." By then, he had married Ohio native Emma Colborn, daughter of William Colborn.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup>William E. Connelley, "Henry Daniel Lee," *History of Kansas State and People* (Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1928), 1703. Connelley's contemporary account's very specific date implies accuracy. Another source, Ruby Phillips Bramwell, *City on the Move: The Story of Salina* (Salina: Survey Press, 1969), 168-170, contends that Lee was born in 1849. Still another source, the *Kansas City Star*, gives a birth date of December 9, 1853 (Clippings, Kansas City Public Library). In the 1880 census, Lee was listed as 31 years of age. This lends credence to an 1849 birth date.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Connelley says Lee was one of 9 children. Another article, "HD Lee Company Returns To Manufacture Popular Garments," *Kansas Business Magazine*, December 1949, 8-9, says he was one of 12 children. The author was unable to confirm either account because no census record could be found.

<sup>4</sup>Connelley. A check of the 1850 US Census found no Scotland natives by this name in Vermont. A *Kansas City Star* article mentions that Lee's father's name was Michael Lee. There was a Michael Lee listed in Randolph, Vermont in the 1850 US Census. He was an Irish immigrant born in 1819. The "Who's Who in Kansas City" article says his mother's name was Mary Ann Cunningham.

<sup>5</sup>Shannon Drews, "HD Lee's story was rags to riches tale," *Salina Journal*, 12 November 1978, 34. "Who's Who in Kansas City," *Kansas City Star*, 5 February 1922? (the article says his Kansas City plant was built six years ago), Kansas City Public Library clippings. The Who's Who article says the family to whom Lee was "farmed out" was named Mosier. There were no Mosiers recorded as living in Sharon, Vermont in the 1860 Census. However, there were Mosiers there in 1850. The Who's Who account, which provides the most detail on Lee's early life, says Lee "Stayed there until he was 11 years old, when he obtained his release." This implies that Lee was some kind of apprentice.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. Some sources, including Connelley, say he moved to Galion at the age of 12. However, Lee was not listed in Ohio in the 1870 census.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>1880 US Census, Connelley. No record for William Colburn could be found. "Who's Who in Kansas City," *Kansas City Star*, 5 February 1922? (Kansas City Public Library Clippings).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7 **HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas**

Lee retained a 49% interest in his oil business. This and the income from selling a 51% interest to Standard Oil in 1879, made him a very wealthy man. Some sources say the transaction allowed him to retire a millionaire by the age of 35.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, Lee's poor health limited his ability to enjoy retirement. According to some sources, Lee suffered "a general breakdown in health that lasted ten years."<sup>11</sup> Others say a severe bout with pulmonary tuberculosis left Lee homebound for years. It is said that Lee spent his convalescence reading about the American West. With treatment, Lee's health slowly improved – allowing him to plan his next career move.<sup>12</sup>

Lee's reading had convinced him that he could make a second fortune in the West. In the late 1880s, he left Ohio to pursue business interests in Kansas. Lee scouted two Kansas communities along the Union Pacific Railroad, Abilene and Salina.<sup>13</sup> In 1889, after the City of Salina pledged \$25,000 toward the enterprise, Lee located his new Mercantile Company there.<sup>14</sup> Over the years, Lee expanded his Salina empire to include the HD Lee Mercantile Company, Lee Hardware Company, Farmers National Bank, Lee Warren Mill, and Kansas Ice and Storage Company.<sup>15</sup>

Lee was able to devote his full attention to business in part because he had no family of his own. When asked about his hobbies, Lee replied "I never allowed myself to get one. My whole life has been devoted to business."<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that he was married in Ohio, most in Salina and Kansas City knew him as a bachelor with his nose to the grindstone. Some sources go so far as to say he never married.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Lee was married until just before he moved to Salina. He and his wife Emma divorced on January 22, 1889, the year Lee founded the HD Lee Company.<sup>18</sup> In 1900, Emma Lee was living with her widowed mother in Galion, Ohio.<sup>19</sup>

As a single man, Lee did not maintain a conventional household. When in Salina, he lived with the family of Massachusetts native William B. Flanders at their home at 200 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Lee befriended Flanders, a former Salina mayor, during his first months in town. Flanders owned a mercantile business, but was also a clerk for the Western Star Milling Company.<sup>20</sup> Although Lee was not registered as a member of the Flanders household in the 1895, 1900, 1905, 1910, or 1915 censuses, he is documented as living with them from 1889 until 1916.<sup>21</sup> Lee also spent time at a health resort at Excelsior Springs, Missouri, which he credited "for NPS

<sup>10</sup> "HD Lee Company Returns to Manufacture Popular Garments."

<sup>11</sup> "Who's Who in Kansas City."

<sup>12</sup> Drews.

<sup>13</sup> Connelley.

<sup>14</sup> Connelley says the city passed \$25,000 in bonds. Some sources say \$20,000. "HD Lee Knows Salina for his Home Residence," Salina Clippings, Kansas State Historical Society, 1927.

<sup>15</sup> Connelley.

<sup>16</sup> "Who's Who in Kansas City."

<sup>17</sup> Drews.

<sup>18</sup> Crawford County, Ohio, Clerk of the Court, Divorce Records.

<sup>19</sup> 1900 US Census.

<sup>20</sup> Martha Hagedorn-Krass, National Register Nomination, Flanders-Lee House, Salina; Martha Hagedorn-Krass, "Listing of Flanders-Lee House Recognizes Importance of HD Lee to Development of Salina," *Kansas Preservation* v. 10, no. 2 (Jan-Feb 1988).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. In fact, Lee is absent altogether from US Census records for Salina. The last census record from his is in Galion, Ohio in 1880.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas

Section number 8 Page 8

alleviation of his physical ailments...<sup>22</sup> In 1916, Lee purchased the Inter-City Grocery Company and moved to Kansas City to manage his largest plant.

HD Lee died March 15, 1928 after suffering a heart attack in San Antonio.<sup>23</sup> LC Staples, Lee's niece's husband, served as president of the HD Lee Company until his death in 1942. Lee willed much of his property to his nephew Charles Lee. When Charles Lee died, he left his property to his nephew Ed Moses III.<sup>24</sup>

## The HD Lee Company

With the help of capital raised from \$25,000 in city bonds, HD Lee commissioned the construction of his Wholesale Grocery Company on the southeast corner of Santa Fe and Elm in 1889.<sup>25</sup> The original building was a four-story wooden post structure that stretched from the Santa Fe Avenue street plane to the north-south alley between Santa Fe and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. By 1899, Lee had doubled the size of his operation with the construction of a second structure that stretched from the alley behind the original building to 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Between 1892 and 1899, the Union Pacific had constructed a spur line that ran along the building's north side.<sup>26</sup>

The HD Lee Company survived both an economic depression and a ruinous fire to further expand its holdings in the early twentieth century. On December 4, 1903, a fire destroyed the \$125,000 facility, as well as \$450,000 in stock. The fire produced such a spectacle that Salina schools closed so students and teachers could gaze at the fiery wreckage.<sup>27</sup> The newspaper reported that some onlookers looted canned goods from the scene. Following the fire, the company announced plans for the immediate reconstruction with the cooperation of its unpaid customers:

Friends, the HD Lee Mercantile Company has met with disaster, our buildings and stock have burned. We have many unpaid accounts on our books, and, pending the necessary delay in collecting our insurance, we feel that our immediate rebuilding and resumption of business depends on your response.<sup>28</sup>

The pleas elicited \$500,000 which the company used to help rebuild. Between the time of the fire and 1905, HD Lee invested heavily in his Salina operation, constructing a new facility that was more than double the size of the destroyed building and building a new facility to the east for his Kansas Ice and Storage Company. Two five-story masses housed the HD Lee Companies. The mass on the north housed HD Lee's General Merchandise Company. The mass on the south housed the Lee Hardware Company. The two were divided by a 40' drive that provided dock access along one long side of each mass. The facility was powered by a central heat, light and power station attached to the east side of the ice company building. Railroad spur lines

<sup>22</sup> Connelley.

<sup>23</sup> Drews.

<sup>24</sup> Drews; "HD Lee Company Returns to Manufacture Popular Garments."

<sup>25</sup> Connelley.

<sup>26</sup> Sanborn Maps, 1892, 1899.

<sup>27</sup> Drews.

<sup>28</sup> Fred Aldrich, "Little Journeys in the Heart of America," *Kansas City Journal* 3 April 1916, 124-125.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9 **HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas**

ran east to west along the north side of the mercantile mass and the south side of the hardware mass. Another spur line ran north to south to the Kansas Ice and Storage Company.<sup>29</sup>

The interiors of the new complex housed a complete array of wholesale goods. Both had offices on the west ends of their first floors. The grocery department occupied much of the north mass, with fruit and vegetable vaults in the basement and fruit processing on the second floor. The Lee Company sold its canned fruits and vegetables under the "Mother's Style," "Cadet," and "Summer Girl" labels.<sup>30</sup> The storage and processing rooms were "supplied with temperature and air-filtering equipment, such as has not been provided by one in five hundred wholesale houses of the country ..."<sup>31</sup> In the general merchandise mass's tea and coffee department, the company ground, roasted, packed and labeled the caffeinated beverages. Notions were housed on the fifth floor. The hardware mass on the south side of the complex had wholesale hardware on the west side, heavy hardware on the east side, and paints and oils in the basement. To avert another total fire loss, Lee equipped the building with advanced sprinkler systems, fire doors and fire walls. The company also began training employees to extinguish fires.<sup>32</sup> By 1911, he had expanded his ice company to include cold storage and supply an adjacent creamery.<sup>33</sup>

For twenty years, Lee had toiled to dominate the regional wholesale grocery and hardware market. But a series of serendipitous events in the first decades of the twentieth century caused the company to change direction. When he lost faith in a clothing supplier on the east coast, Lee began manufacturing his own clothing brand at his Salina plant in 1911. In 1912 or 1913, HD Lee imported an auto mechanic from Detroit to fix his car. According to company lore, Lee sewed together a work jacket and pants to protect the mechanic's clothes and skin from the dirty work. The result was the first pair of denim coveralls, named "Unionalls" because they resembled union suits. The Unionall, invented and manufactured in Salina, thrust the company into the business of garment production. HD Lee began selling Unionalls on a mass scale during World War I when the US Government ordered as many as the company could produce for fatigues. In order to meet the demand, Lee opened a new plant in South Bend, Indiana and a Kansas City, Kansas plant in 1915. In 1916, Lee purchased Kansas City's Inter-City Grocery Company and announced plans for a nine-story \$250,000 Kansas City, Missouri plant to replace an already-outgrown plant in Kansas City, Kansas. At the same time, Lee made \$150,000 to \$180,000 worth of additions to his Salina complex, which remained the company's headquarters until 1950.<sup>34</sup>

After the War, Lee turned his attention back to the civilian market, selling Unionalls to farmers and factory workers and revolutionizing the denim jeans industry with zippers and saddle crotches. In 1917, the company launched the apparel industry's first nationwide advertising campaign by printing a full-page *Saturday Evening Post* ad.<sup>35</sup> In 1920, the company broke ground in brand marketing when it created the "Buddy Lee" doll, which resembled the wildly popular cupie dolls in Lee clothes. By 1922, Lee had 2000 employees and property worth over \$12 million.<sup>36</sup> Despite his success in the garment industry, Lee continued to invest in his

<sup>29</sup> Sanborn Map, 1905.

<sup>30</sup> *International Directory of Company Histories*, V. 8, St. James Press, 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Aldrich.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Sanborn Map, 1911.

<sup>34</sup> Aldrich.

<sup>35</sup> *International Directory of Company Histories*.

<sup>36</sup> "Who's Who in Kansas City."

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas

Section number 8 Page 10

other business interests. In 1927, Lee expanded his hardware company, building a new warehouse south of the Salina hardware building. The new building was connected to the old complex with a stair tower and entrance on its west side.<sup>37</sup> By the time of HD Lee's death in 1928, the company he built employed 4500 workers at three plants (Salina, Kansas City (MO), Trenton (NJ)) and two distribution stations (Los Angeles, San Francisco).<sup>38</sup>

Like many companies, HD Lee was hit hard by the Great Depression, which forced it to cut wages to avoid radical layoffs. But the company rebounded beginning in 1936, when it formed the Rodeo Cowboys Association and first produced its Lee Rider pants. Lee was the nation's largest work clothes producer by 1939, exceeding \$6 million in annual sales.<sup>39</sup> During the 1940s, the company again tooled for war production, limiting its civilian output. Between 1940 and 1949, Lee's production of clothing goods doubled.<sup>40</sup> In 1943, the company dropped "Mercantile" from its name, to become "HD Lee Company, Inc." Lee manufactured denim clothing at the Salina plant, whose floor retains blue stains from the indigo used to dye jeans (see Photo 11).

Lee continued to focus on its successful garment business in the 1950s. In 1950, it sold its grocery interests for \$3 million to Consolidated Grocers of Chicago. It bought out local and regional clothing manufacturers and built new factories, including one in Chetopa, Kansas. In 1950, it also moved its headquarters to Kansas City. The Vanity Fair Corporation bought the Lee Clothing Company, by then an international interest, in 1970.<sup>41</sup>

## Salina

When he arrived in Salina in 1889, HD Lee found an established western town at the height of a real estate boom. Sited on the banks of the Smoky Hill River, Salina was founded by William Phillips, who organized a town company in 1858. During the early years, it was an Indian trading center. Businessmen began earnestly investing in the city after the arrival of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1867. Frame homes and businesses replaced log cabins and shanties. Salina was finally incorporated as a city of the third class in 1870, twelve years after its founding. Until the 1870s, Salina's downtown consisted of a collection of wood-frame buildings, many of which were destroyed in a devastating 1871 fire.

After a short stint as a cattle town in 1872, Salina evolved into a trade center for the surrounding farm region. The community was especially hard hit when grasshoppers destroyed area crops in 1874. The same year, another devastating fire wreaked havoc on downtown. Following the fire, the city passed ordinances prohibiting the construction of wood buildings downtown. As a result of the ordinance and the improving economic times, townboosters began constructing permanent brick and stone commercial blocks.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Sanborn Map, 1931.

<sup>38</sup> Connelley.

<sup>39</sup> *International Directory of Company Histories*.

<sup>40</sup> "HD Lee Company Returns to Manufacture Popular Garments."

<sup>41</sup> *International Directory of Company Histories*.

<sup>42</sup> Frank Blackmar, ed., *Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc.* (Chicago: Standard Pub. Co., 1912). *Salina, Kansas – past and present, progress and prosperity – Souvenir* (Kansas City: Freeman Publishing Co., 1917).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas

Section number 8 Page 11

Like many western towns, Salina experienced a period of prosperity in the 1870s and 1880s. Between 1870 and 1880, the town's population had tripled from 918 to 3111. Between 1880 and 1890, the town's population again doubled to 6149. In the 1870s, Salina became a milling center, with its first water-powered flour mill opening in 1875 and a steam-powered mill opening in 1878. By 1887, the town had 6 mills and 7 grain elevators.<sup>43</sup> The HD Lee Company, founded 1889, was the town's first major industry that was not dedicated solely to agriculture.

Like many Kansas cities, Salina's population declined during the 1890s depression, falling from 6149 to 6074. But the city's population rebounded in the early twentieth century, jumping to 20,155 by 1930 and 21,073 in 1940.<sup>44</sup> As downtown expanded during the 1920s, new industries, particularly auto-related facilities like auto garages, built buildings adjacent to the Lee Complex. During World War II, Salina became a military center with the opening of Camp Phillips and later Schilling Air Force Base.

## Summary

The HD Lee Complex continues to interpret its association with one of the world's most successful clothing manufacturing companies. They are interpretive of American industry in the first half of the twentieth century and of HD Lee's innovations in the area of manufacturing.

<sup>43</sup> Sanborn Map, 1887.

<sup>44</sup> US Census.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 12 **HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas**

---

### Bibliography

- Blackmar, Frank, ed. *Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc.* Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912.
- Bramwell, Ruby Phillips. *City on the Move: The Story of Salina.* Salina: Survey Press, 1969.
- Connelley, William E. *History of Kansas State and People.* Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1928.
- Cutler, William. *History of the State of Kansas.* Chicago: AT Andreas, 1883.
- Federal Writers' Project. *A Guide to Salina, Kansas.* 1939.
- International Directory of Company Histories.* Vol. 8. St. James Press, 1994.
- Kansas Business Magazine.*
- Kansas Census, 1885, 1895, 1905, 1915.
- Kansas City Journal.*
- Kansas City Star.*
- Kansas Preservation.*
- Salina, Kansas - past and present, progress and prosperity – Souvenir.* Kansas City, Mo.: Freeman Publishing Company, 191?.
- Salina Journal.*
- Sanborn Maps, 1887, 1892, 1899, 1905, 1911, 1917, 1931, 1947.
- US Census, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 13

HD Lee Company  
Saline County, Kansas

## Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property includes the South 30 Feet of Lots 51, 53 and 55 and the North 30 Feet of Lot 57, Santa Fe Avenue, and the South 30 Feet of Lot 52 and Lots 54, 56, and North 30 Feet of Lot 58, 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Original Town of Salina, Section 12, Township 4, Range 3.

## Boundary Justification

The property boundary is the current legal description for the property on which the Lee Complex sits. The current address is 248 N. Santa Fe. The property is under the ownership of BR Investing, LLC.

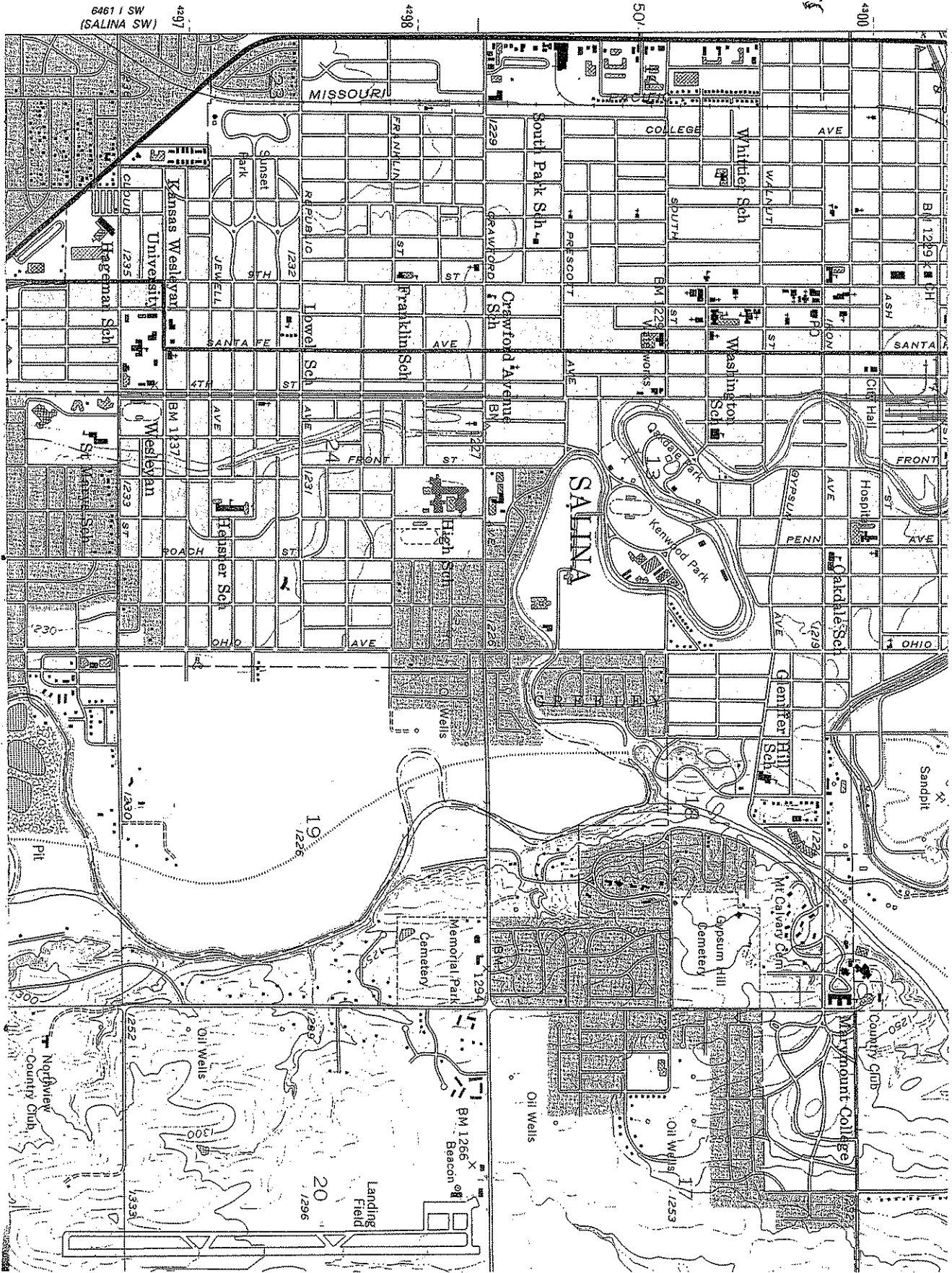
## Photo Log – Digital Images are filed at the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas

1. Exterior. Front (west) elevation looking northeast. Mercantile building is on the left; hardware company building in the middle; and hardware warehouse on the right.
2. Exterior. Side (south) elevation looking northwest. Showing reinforced concrete construction of hardware warehouse (1927).
3. Exterior. Rear (east) elevation looking west. Showing rear elevation of hardware warehouse (1927) and south elevation of hardware company building (1903).
4. Exterior. Rear (east) elevation looking northwest. Showing east elevations and south elevations of hardware company building and mercantile building.
5. Exterior. Front (west) and side (north) elevations of mercantile building.
6. Exterior. Industrial bridge between hardware and mercantile buildings.
7. Interior. Fireplace in front office of mercantile building, first floor.
8. Interior. Vault in front office of mercantile building, first floor.
9. Interior. First floor of mercantile building showing typical timber framing.
10. Interior. First floor of hardware building showing typical timber framing and open stairs.
11. Interior. Staining from indigo jeans dye.
12. Interior. Typical reinforced concrete piers/structure in hardware warehouse (1927).
13. Interior. Woodwork in office space on east end of first floor in hardware warehouse (1927).
14. Typical steel hopper window on dock sides of hardware company building and mercantile building.

HD Lee Company  
Complex

Salina, Saline Co. KS

- 14/620751E
- 4300283N
- 14/620834E
- 4300284N
- 3.14/620835E
- 4300213N
- 4.14/620752E
- 4800178N



6461 / SW  
(SALINA SW)